

Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.), Chairman Ed Markey (D-Mass.) and a bipartisan group of legislators on Wednesday introduced the Home Star Energy Retrofit Act, calling it critical job-creating legislation.

Alongside leaders of the 1,000-member Home Star Coalition, Welch, Markey, Rep. Vern Ehlers (R-Mich.) and Rep. Dennis Cardoza (D-Calif.) said the energy efficiency retrofit bill would create 170,000 jobs and save families close to \$10 billion in energy bills in the next decade.

The legislation, which has been endorsed by President Obama, will be marked-up in the House Committee on Energy and Commerce this Thursday. A previous draft of the bill passed the Subcommittee on Energy and the Environment by voice vote in March and companion legislation is being considered in the Senate.

"Home Star will create hundreds of thousands of jobs where we need them the most: in building and construction, manufacturing and retail. At the same time, it will empower families to invest in their homes, saving billions in energy bills and reducing harmful carbon emissions," Welch said. "This bipartisan legislation addresses our nation's energy and unemployment challenges through practical, common sense action. Together, we can save more by using less energy."

"Home Star is a legislative triple-play that will increase job opportunities, save money on energy bills, and reduce the need for costly energy," said Markey, who chairs the Energy and Environment Subcommittee in the Energy and Commerce Committee. "When it is signed into law, Home Star will be a home run for our economy, our homes, and our wallets."

Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Henry Waxman, who is an original sponsor of the bill, said, "The Home Star legislation will have a significant economic and environmental benefit to our country. It will deliver jobs, increase energy efficiency in our buildings, and cut carbon pollution in America."

Home Star is a two-year, six billion dollar program designed to spur home energy retrofits by providing direct incentives to homeowners to install American-made energy-saving products and conduct whole-home retrofits. Home Star includes two types of consumer incentives:

- Silver Star – The prescriptive path provides in-store rebates for specific energy-saving

investments, including insulation, duct sealing, windows and doors, air sealing and water heaters. Homeowners receive up to \$1,500 per measure, with a rebate not exceeding \$3,000 or 50 percent of the total project cost.

- Gold Star – The performance path rewards homeowners who conduct a comprehensive energy audit and implement a variety of measures to reduce energy use. Consumers receive \$3,000 for a demonstrated savings of 20 percent, plus an additional \$1,000 for each additional 5 percent energy savings – capped at 50 percent of the project cost.

The bipartisan legislation has been endorsed by a broad range of business, labor, environmental and consumer groups. Supporters range from President Obama, who included Home Star as one of three planks in his job-creation agenda late last year, to former Gov. John Engler (R-Mich.), who testified in favor of the bill in his role as Chairman of the National Association of Manufacturers.

"Energy conservation is the easiest first step we can take to reduce demand for energy, both in our homes, and collectively as a nation," Ehlers said. "By providing these incentives, we will help families save money and reduce our overall energy usage, and help provide jobs in industries that have been hit hard by the recession. As co-chairman of the House Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Caucus, I am pleased to support this energy saving effort."

Home Star is designed to move quickly and immediately create jobs by limiting red tape and bureaucratic delays. The program relies on existing industries and depends on labor in a sector of the economy with a 25 percent unemployment rate. It will build on current state programs and existing standards to ensure quality.

"This is the kind of common-sense bipartisan legislation needed to help right our economy," Cardoza said. "While taking important steps to address our nation's energy needs, this legislation gets workers back on the job and saves families money on their energy bills at a time when every penny counts."

Members were joined at the press conference unveiling the Home Star bill by leaders of the Home Star Coalition. Other speakers included Masco Home Services President Larry Laseter and National Lumber & Building Material Dealers Association CEO Michael O'Brien.